

The story of it is somewhat on this wise. In earlier days in England, Church and State were one; king and bishop, or bishop and king, were supreme, and the part of the people was simply to obey.

When increasing knowledge made men dissatisfied with bondage, the struggle for freedom both in Church and State went hand in hand.

In 1643 the Long Parliament assembled. Church and State were one. There was in a sense a High Church and a Low Church party then as now. The King belonged to the then High Church party, the Parliament to the Low; and taking the power in their hands, one of their earliest acts was to appoint a Committee, or Commission, of eminent men, representing chiefly the Low Church party, to draw up a statement of Bible truth and teaching and an order of Government and Discipline and Worship, for the guidance of the Church.

This Commission, or Assembly, consisted of 151 members, of whom 121 were clergymen, and 30 were laymen. Of the latter, 10 were members of the House of Lords, and 20 were members of the House of Commons. Of the 121 clergymen five were Presbyterian ministers from Scotland who were asked to act with the Assembly. All the others were of the Church of England, 4 of them being bishops. Of the 30 laymen 3 were Scottish lords, two of whom never attended, while the third took little part, and just as well, for he afterward was lord Lauderdale the bitter persecutor of those whom he now professed to represent.

The five Scottish ministers were, Alexander Henderson, George Gillespie, Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford, and Robert Douglass. These were eminently good as well as learned men, ranking among the leading Divines of their times, and they took a prominent part in the great work of the Assembly.

The four bishops did not attend, and as the Evangelical party represented, on the whole, the greatest learning and ability, they gradually gained the ascendancy as the work progressed, with the result that their finished task bears the stamp that we now see in those summaries of Bible truth which have never been surpassed by man.

The Assembly first met in the Henry VII Chapel, in Westminster Abbey, 1 July, 1643. Of the 151, who had been appointed, sixty-

nine were present on the opening day, and there were never more than 80 present at any one time. As the weather became colder towards winter they removed to the "Jerusalem Chamber" adjoining the Abbey where they could have a fire. They continued their work through five years, six months and twenty-two days, and held in all one thousand one hundred and sixty-three sessions.

Of the doctrinal statements the Confession of Faith was the first finished and presented to Parliament, who returned it with the request that the Scripture proofs upon which the statements were based be affixed to it, which was accordingly done.

After this the Larger and Shorter Catechisms were in like manner completed, as summaries, longer and shorter, of the Confession of Faith, and put in the form of question and answer for convenience of memorizing and teaching.

By October, 1647, the Assembly had agreed upon a Directory of Public Worship, a Form of Church Government and Discipline, a Confession of Faith and Catechisms: had adopted a resolution acknowledging the services of the Scottish Commissioners; and their work was practically completed and approved and accepted by Parliament.

But the king was not satisfied. He proposed to Parliament that in the meantime, for three years, the Presbyterian doctrine and order should be accepted, but that the Assembly should continue its sittings and revise its work, and that 20 more Episcopalians should be added to it. Parliament refused to accede to his proposal, and on Feb., 2, 1649, formally dissolved the Gathering which, at its bidding, had convened six years before; and the Westminster "Assembly of Divines" had passed into history.

As above stated they had completed their work in 1647, and in many places the 250th anniversary of that completion is to be celebrated during the coming summer, as one of the great events in the history of the Presbyterian Church throughout the world.

How was it that their work became chiefly the heritage of Scottish Presbyterianism rather than of England and its Church? Briefly stated it was as follows:—

As soon as the work of the Westminster Assembly was completed the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland adopted its several statements as founded on and agree-